

Message Text

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PAGE 01 CARACA 04496 052036Z
ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /011 W
-----052301Z 023896 /70
P 051956Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7526

C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 4496

FOR ARA ASST SEC TODMAN
EO 11652 GDS
TAGS: OVIP (TODMAN, TERENCE A), CO VE BR AR BL
SUBJ: TODMAN VISIT: PRESS GUIDANCE

REF: A CARACAS 4132, B STATE 92289

1. YOU WILL MEET THE PRESS ON TWO OCCASIONS IN CARACAS:
UPON ARRIVAL AT THE AIRPORT AND IN PRESS CONFERENCE WHICH
WE WILL HAVE LATE THE AFTERNOON OF MAY 10(REFTEL A).
REPORTERS WILL MEET YOU AT THE PLANE. WHILE NO FORMAL
ARRIVAL STATEMENT IS NECESSARY OR RECOMMENDED YOU SHOULD
BE PREAPRED TO SAY A FEW GENERAL WORDS OF "PLEASURE TO BE
HERE" AND TO ANSWER A FEW QUESTIONS INFORMALLY. WE CAN
DUCK EXTENSIVE QUESTIONING BY NOTING THAT A PRESS CON-
FERENCE WILL BE HELD LATER. REPORTERS NORMALLY ON DUTY
AT THE PALACE AND THE FOREIGN MINISTRY MAY ALSO CATCH YOU
GOING IN OR OUT AND ASK QUESTIONS. BUT THESE CAN BE
GRACIOUSLY DEFLECTED ON THE GROUNDS YOU WILL HAVE A
PRESS CONFERENCE.

2. CARLOS AND SOFIA RANGEL, WHO HAVE A "TODAY"
TYPE TV SHOW ANS ARE LOCAL TV'S FOREMOST NEWS
COMMENTATORS, HAVE ASKED IF THEY CAN FILM A BRIEF
(5MINUTE) INTERVIEW WITH YOU. WE THINK THIS WOULD
BE A GOOD IDEA AND WE COULD DO IT RIGHT AFTER THE PRESS
CONFERENCE IF YOU HAVE NO OBJECTION.
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PAGE 02 CARACA 04496 052036Z

3. THE VENEZUELAN PRESS IS AMONG THE FREEST IN LATIN
AMERICA, WITH PAPERS AND MAGAZINES INDEPENDENTLY OWNED
AND MANAGED AND WITH NO SYSTEM OF GOVT CENSORSHIP.
THE GOVT ITSELF MANAGES TWO TV STATIONS BUT
DOES NOT INTERFERE WITH OPERATIONS OF THE TWO OTHER
NETWORKS. REPORTERS ARE ENERGETIC AND UBIQUITOUS, AND

SOMETIMES "PUSHY" IN TRYING TO GET INTERVIEWS. BUT THEY ARE NOT PARTICULARLY WELL-INFORMED OR SOPHISTICATED, EXCEPT FOR THE RANGELS.

4. GIVEN THIS ENVIRONMENT PLUS THE FACT THAT THIS IS YOUR FIRST OFFICIAL VISIT TO VENEZUELA, A WIDE ARRAY OF POLICY-ORIENTED QUESTIONS CAN BE EXPECTED. MOST OF THESE ARE READILY OBVIOUS. ASIDE FROM THE "WHY ARE YOU HERE" AND "WHAT DID YOU TALK ABOUT" TYPE OF QUESTIONS, THE FOLLOWING IS A RECAPITULATION OF THE MAIN TOPICS LIKELY TO BE ASKED TO SERVE AS A CHECKLIST.

A). PANAMA. WHAT IS THE STATUS, WHAT DO WE EXPECT, WHEN WILL WE SIGN, WHAT IS OUR POSITION?

B). CUBA. ESPECIALLY AFTER YOUR NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE CUBANS, WHAT ARE YOUR IMPRESSIONS, WHAT ARE THE PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE? WHAT NEXT?

C). WHAT IS THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION'S POSITION ON AMENDING THE US TRADE ACT?

D). WILL SOME LA CRITICISM OF OUR HUMAN RIGHTS STATEMENTS AFFECT BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH COUNTRIES SUCH AS CHILE AND BRAZIL? WILL THE US ASSUME A LOWER PROFILE ON THE ISSUE IF CRITICISM CONTINUES?

E). GIVEN CANCELLATION BY FIVE LA COUNTRIES OF MILITARY ASSISTANCE AGREEMENTS WITH THE US IN CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 CARACA 04496 052036Z

PROTEST AGAINST US CRITICISM OF ALLEGED DENIAL OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THOSE COUNTRIES, WHAT IS THE FUTURE OF MILITARY ASSISTANCE, IN GENERAL, IN LATIN AMERICA?

F). SINCE THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION'S POSITION ON NUCLEAR NON-PROLIFERATION HAS CAUSED TENSION BETWEEN THE US AND BRAZIL, HOW CAN THE OPPOSING VIEWS BE RECONCILED SHORT OF A POLITICAL RUPTURE BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES, WHICH COULD WEAKEN WESTERN HEMISPHERIC SOLIDARITY?

G). AS A COUNTRY RELYING LARGELY ON EXPORT OF RAW MATERIALS, VENEZUELA IS EXTREMELY INTERESTED IN THE NORTH-SOUTH DIALOGUE NOW UNDERWAY IN PARIS. WHAT PRIORITY DOES THE US GIVE TO THESE TALKS. WHAT ARE THE US GOALS AT THE TALKS?

H). WILL THE PRESIDENT'S RECENTLY PROPOSED ENERGY PROGRAM AFFECT US TRADE RELATIONS WITH OPEC COUNTRIES, ESPECIALLY VENEZUELA? WHAT WOULD BE THE

US RESPONSE TO ANOTHER PRICE HIKE AFTER THE PROPOSED
OPEC MEETING IN JUNE?

I). WHAT ISSUES WILL BE UPPERMOST ON PRESIDENT
CARTER'S MIND DURING THE JUNE VISIT BY PRESIDENT PEREZ
TO WASHINGTON?

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 05-May-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977CARACA04496
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770158-0593
Format: TEL
From: CARACAS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770591/aaaadasd.tel
Line Count: 124
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: a783179a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 30-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2634692
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: TODMAN VISIT: PRESS GUIDANCE
TAGS: OVIP, CO, VE, BR, AR, BL, (TODMAN, TERENCE A)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/a783179a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009